



Director
Bo Welch and top
cat Mike Myers

PUTTING ON THE TOP CAT

After firmly establishing himself as one of Hollywood's most sought after production designers, Bo Welch explains why he felt compelled to helm Brian Grazer's latest Seus-ian screen adaptation: *The Cat In The Hat*.

With a CV boasting designer chores on such visually arresting extravaganzas as *Beetlejuice* and the *Men In Black* films, Bo Welch regularly rose to the challenge of serving the imagination of some of the most visually fertile directors around, including Tim Burton, Lawrence Kasdan, Mike Nichols and Barry Sonnenfeld. But that was then. Egged on by Sonnenfeld, Welch's nascent desire to direct soon began to take concrete form.

"I started saying probably ten years ago I want to direct. But just to get a job is really difficult. You start taking meetings and people go 'What do you think of this?' And generally, when you haven't done anything, it's dreadful material that you feign enthusiasm for. If you are lucky you don't get those jobs" recalls Welch.

Eventually Sonnenfeld provided Welch with his first directing gigs – a couple of episodes of his sadly shortlived series *The Tick* starring Patrick Warburton and Welch was hooked.

"When I started as a production designer that was enough for me. I was completely consumed. And then you grow and you build a career. You exercise certain things in your head and the natural human instinct is to want to try more. See what you can do and see what you are capable of. You realise how interesting the directing job is. Hard... but fascinating beyond words."

Diving headlong into an expensive project brimming with elaborate prosthetics and a plethora of digital FX – not to mention an established comic superstar at its epicentre, would likely provide the most seasoned director with a case of the heebie jeebies. Welch, however, found the experience delightful.

"Mike's got a big following and it is *The Cat in the Hat*, so he's pretty critical to the success of the film. But whereas I think with *The Grinch*, Jim Carrey made that movie successful almost single-handedly because the supporting parts weren't that interesting.

In this film I think that supporting parts generally do what a supporting cast does. That is, take some of the pressure of the principle character. So there isn't 90 minutes of constant pressure to be funny. There's other things happening. It makes it a little more layered and interesting. You try lots of stuff and some survives. That's the process". Whilst the reviews haven't all been kind, should the opportunity of a sequel arise Welch is keener than mustard.

"Boy! If I was lucky enough I would. I had a lot of fun on this. I would like to do something in between to clear the power! Like between courses of fish and meat I'd like to have some sorbet".

Such as what exactly? "Maybe something like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*" he muses before adding "something a little darker maybe; just to switch gears."

***The Cat in the Hat* is available now and reviewed on page 75.**